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# NEWS RELEASE

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## Chief Justice Announces New Members of State Judicial Council

San Francisco—Chief Justice Ronald M. George today announced the appointment of seven members to the Judicial Council of California, the constitutionally mandated policymaking body of the California courts.

The appointees are Justice Brad R. Hill, of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District; Judge George J. Abdallah, Jr., of the Superior Court of San Joaquin County; and Mr. Michael D. Planet, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Ventura County. Reappointees are Presiding Judge Nancy Wieben Stock of the Superior Court of Orange County, president of the Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee; Judge Terry B. Friedman, of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County; Judge James Michael Welch, of the Superior Court of San Bernardino County; and Mr. Anthony P. Capozzi, attorney, Fresno.

It is anticipated that Presiding Judge Ira R. Kaufman, of the Superior Court of Plumas County, will be appointed as an advisory member of the council after he assumes office as president of the California Judges Association later this year.

Chaired by the Chief Justice, the Judicial Council presently consists of 14 judicial members appointed by the Chief Justice, 4 attorney members appointed by the State Bar Board of Governors, 1 member from each house of the Legislature, and 8 advisory members. The Administrative Director of the Courts serves as secretary to the council.

Established by the state Constitution in 1926, the 29-member Judicial Council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice in the nation's largest court system.

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In recent years, the council has taken a leadership role in the unification of the state's municipal and superior courts, state funding of the courts, the ongoing transfer of trial court facilities from the counties to the state, jury system reforms, and numerous other initiatives to make the courts more effective in responding to the needs of Californians.

A summary of the appointments follows.

**Justice Brad R. Hill**, Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District. Justice Hill was appointed to the appellate bench in 2006. Appointed to Fresno County's municipal court in 1991 by Governor George Deukmejian, he was appointed to the superior court in 1998 by Governor Pete Wilson, where he served as assistant presiding judge (2000–2002) and presiding judge (2003–2004). Before taking the bench, Justice Hill practiced civil litigation for eight years. He was vice-president of the California Judges Association (2005–2006), has served as faculty in judicial education programs, and has been active in many Judicial Council committees, such as the Bench-Bar Coalition, the Working Group on Court Security, the Day-on-the-Bench Steering Committee, and the Court Facilities Transitional Task Force. He also previously served as a superior court judge on the Judicial Council (2000–2003). Justice Hill has been widely recognized and honored for his commitment to fair and impartial access to the courts. He succeeds Presiding Justice Candace D. Cooper, Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Eight and is appointed to a three-year term.

**Judge George J. Abdallah, Jr.**, Superior Court of San Joaquin County. Judge Abdallah was first elected to the bench in 1987 as a municipal court commissioner and judge pro tempore and then was appointed as a municipal court judge in 1995. In 1998 he was elected to the superior court and served as presiding judge of the superior court from 2002 to 2003. Prior to his first judicial appointment, he practiced law for seven years. Judge Abdallah has extensive teaching experience at Humphreys College; Humphreys College, Laurence Drivon School of Law; and the University of the Pacific. He has served the community through a variety of organizations in the fields of education, law, and medicine, including as a trustee for the Stockton-San Joaquin County Library. Judge Abdallah presently serves the judicial branch through participation in the Judicial Council's Criminal Law Advisory Committee, the Administrative Office of the Courts' Center for Judicial Education and Research, and the California Judges Association. He serves on the panel from which the California Supreme Court appoints special masters for Commission on Judicial Performance proceedings. Judge Abdallah succeeds Presiding Judge Suzanne N. Kingsbury of the Superior Court of El Dorado County and is appointed to a three-year term.

**Mr. Michael D. Planet**, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Ventura County. Mr. Planet became the court's executive officer in 2001. He has a long history of service to the public and the judicial branch. He was assistant staff director of the American Bar Association (1981–1984), deputy court administrator and judicial administrator of the Superior Court of Arizona, Maricopa County in Phoenix (1984–1991), and court

administrator of King County Superior Court in Seattle (1991–2001). Mr. Planet is presently a member of the California Court Clerks Association, the National Association for Court Management, and the Urban Court Managers Network. He has been active in a variety of Judicial Council committees, including the Trial Court Budget Working Group, the Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee, the Kleps Awards Committee, the California Court Case Management System Steering Committee, the Collaborative Court-County Working Group on Enhanced Collections, and the Court Executives Advisory Committee. Mr. Planet has authored numerous articles on judicial administration and the legal system. He succeeds Ms. Tamara Lynn Beard, executive officer of the Superior Court of Fresno County, and is appointed to a three-year term.

**Presiding Judge Nancy Wieben Stock**, Superior Court of Orange County. Before her election to the bench in 1990, Judge Stock was Assistant U.S. Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice, Los Angeles (1978–1987), and Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney, Orange County Branch Office (Santa Ana), and First Assistant to Chief, Criminal Justice Division, U.S. Attorney's Office, Los Angeles (1988–1990). Judge Stock is the current chair of the Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee (TCPJAC) and a member of the Judicial Council. Having recently decided to serve a second term as presiding judge, she was nominated by the TCPJAC's Executive Committee to serve a second term as committee chair. Additionally, Judge Stock serves as cochair of the TCPJAC/Court Executives Advisory Committee (CEAC) Joint Working Group on Addressing the Short-Term Strategy to Revive Community-Focused Court Planning and the Operational Plan Working Group. She is also a member of the TCPJAC/CEAC Joint Legislation Working Group and serves as the TCPJAC's liaison to the council's Access and Fairness Advisory Committee. Judge Wieben Stock has been reappointed for a one-year term.

**Judge Terry B. Friedman**, Superior Court of Los Angeles County. Elected to the bench in 1994, Judge Friedman previously was a member of the California State Assembly (1986–1994), executive director of Bet Tzedek (1978–1986), and staff attorney for the Western Center on Law and Poverty (1976–1978). He is a past-president of the California Judges Association. Previously an advisory member of the Judicial Council, Judge Friedman is currently a voting member and has served actively on numerous council committees, including the Policy Coordination and Liaison Committee, the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission, the Probation Services Task Force, and the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee. He is a current member of the council's Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. Judge Friedman has been reappointed to a three-year term.

**Judge James Michael Welch**, Superior Court of San Bernardino County. Judge Welch was appointed to the court in 1995 and served as its presiding judge from 2002 to 2003. In addition to working in private practice for 17 years, he previously served as a commissioner for his court (1990–1995), as a deputy public defender (1987–1990), and as deputy district attorney (1968–1971) for the County of San Bernardino. Judge Welch presently serves on

the Judicial Council's Rules and Projects Committee and Interim Court Facilities Task Force. He has also served on the council's Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee, the Criminal Law Advisory Committee, the Judicial Needs Assessment Project, the Probate Conservatorship Task Force, and the Court Facilities Transitional Task Force. Judge Welch has been reappointed for a three-year term.

**Mr. Anthony P. Capozzi**, attorney. A sole practitioner in the Law Offices of Anthony P. Capozzi, he previously served as an Assistant United States Attorney in Fresno (1973–1979) and was an adjunct professor of the San Joaquin College of Law (1974–1978). Mr. Capozzi is a past-president of the State Bar (2003–2004), has served on its Board of Governors (2000–2004), and was president of the San Joaquin Valley Chapter of the Federal Bar Association (1999) and the Fresno County Bar Association (1999). Mr. Capozzi has served on many statewide committees, including as a fellow of the American Board of Criminal Lawyers and the Task Force on Self-Represented Litigants. He serves on the council's Policy Coordination and Liaison Committee and is cochair of the Bench-Bar Coalition of the Judiciary and the Bar. Mr. Capozzi was reappointed to the council in March 2007 by the Board of Governors of the State Bar of California for a three-year term.

Members of the council are selected through a nominating procedure designed to attract applicants with diverse backgrounds and experience from throughout the legal system and the state. The council's Executive and Planning Committee solicits nominations and applications and then forwards the names of three nominees for each council vacancy to the Chief Justice for consideration. The committee gives added consideration to persons who have served on Judicial Council advisory committees or task forces.

Terms on the council are staggered, with one-third of the council's membership changing each year. New members have been appointed for three-year terms that will begin on September 15, 2007, with the exceptions noted above.

**Note to Editors:** For more information on the Judicial Council of California, see the *Profile of the Judicial Council/Administrative Office of the Courts* on the California Courts Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courtadmin/jc/documents/profilejc.pdf](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courtadmin/jc/documents/profilejc.pdf).

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*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*